

Alex Crank Interview:

How would you describe your area of study to your grandmother?

I'm working towards my MBA and concentrating in Human Resources, specifically Compensation. In a nutshell, compensation teams are the ones who create all the jobs in the organization; including what you're supposed to do while you're working and how much you're being paid for it.

What is your primary motivation for persevering through graduate school?

My primary motivation for completing my MBA is to enhance my opportunities to move further up through organizations with the increased knowledge I'm gaining about the business world. Also, if I don't succeed it'll cause me to go into the real world sooner than I was hoping!

Do you think there is any value in social networking with other graduate students in non-related fields?

There is always a need for social networking – especially in business. Every organization and business is related to my field because even if it's a golf course or art studio, you still need to understand concepts of business and may need the assistance of someone like an accountant, project manager, staffing consultant...etc. in order to run the company as efficiently as possible. Meeting students from all other fields allows you to broaden your knowledge of areas that you may have to work with later on in your career; even if it may not seem like it at the present time. And it never hurts to have more friends in your life!

What is your favorite stress-reduction technique?

Surprisingly I don't get stressed very often, if at all. I do ensure that I take time for myself every day whether I hit golf balls, play guitar, or read my Kindle.

What is the last book you read strictly for pleasure and how long ago was it?

I'm currently reading a book called "Microsoft Access 2010 Programmer's Reference". I'm currently 200 pages or so through it so only 900 more to go. I'm reading it to help enhance my competencies with databases and the programming that goes on behind them. I've realized during my internship that not many people know how to do that and therefore you're indispensable if you can enter the very small niche of people who understand it, as well as, understand compensation.

Please describe your most meaningful academic relationship.

My most meaningful academic relationship would be with my friend Zhenyu Zhang, or Mark whenever he's in the United States. When I was studying abroad in China as an undergraduate, I met Mark while visiting our partner university in Ma'anshan. It was during the summer and he was already signed up to go to Longwood for two years continue his study in Business Administration. Throughout the next two years I worked with Mark quite a bit and even helped him get a Resident Assistant job with the building that I was a Resident Assistant. Although this isn't the typical professor to student academic relationship, Mark and I learned a lot from each other in terms of working with individuals from other cultures, such as expressing concepts and theories within each of our countries, procedures in how to do various business practices including topics as simple as selling and business communication. I

believe understanding cultures outside of just our own is extremely important and especially with a country like China who is growing faster than anyone can even keep up with. In the business world you can't compete to your highest potential without going international and the knowledge I gained from Mark has given me an advantage over a lot of my peers in this sense.

What surprised you the most about graduate school?

I don't think I was surprised just about graduate school as I was with moving to Radford and starting what seemed to be a new life all over again. It felt like when I first moved away to go to college and I didn't know anyone, whether I'd succeed or not, and if I chose the right road in my life.

So far I've thoroughly enjoyed my stay at Radford and am proud to have the opportunity to graduate with an advanced degree from here. I was surprised of how great the faculty and staff within the MBA program are. Their willingness to connect with the students wasn't something I was particularly familiar with during my undergraduate career. Also, when I started working in the MBA Office as a Graduate Assistant I was surprised because I thought I was going into a typical GA position doing, in my opinion, boring work; but I ended up working with some really awesome people and enjoyed going to work every day.

If travel to Mars happens in your lifetime, would you want to be one of the scientists on board? If yes, what would you contribute to the mission?

I would love to go to Mars because I enjoy traveling and experiencing new environments. I'm no rocket scientist, let alone a scientist of any kind, so I'm not sure what I could contribute that would be of any worth besides Space Ice Cream and entertainment. I'm sure my mediation skills from being a Resident Assistant would come into play, as well, since after that long of a flight I'm sure people would get cranky.

What is your favorite comfort food and why? How often do you consume it?

My favorite comfort food is salsa. I love eating salsa on anything that would make sense to put it on. I like making new salsa recipes, although I can never seem to make any as good as the Mexican restaurants around town. Hopefully, one day I'll find a way to convince Shorty at Mi Puertos to hand over the secret salsa recipe and then I'd be set for life. I'd eat salsa every day if I had the money for it.

If you hadn't been admitted to graduate school, what do you think you would be doing right now?

If I hadn't been admitted to graduate school I would probably be working a Human Resource job somewhere around the Charlottesville area. My internship during my undergraduate career was with a staffing agency in Charlottesville and they opened several new offices around the area last year that I could have probably found a job in.

When do you expect to complete your degree?

As of now, I expect to complete my MBA in May 2012. This could change if I happen to get an outstanding job offer from my internship or win the lottery, but next spring is the goal for now.